

The Shining Mountains. Height of Land. Curious plains, rivers, and inlets on a map that is instantly familiar yet strange in detail, a geography of conjecture and fancy. A bearded, casually dressed man from the Bureau of Land Management stood considering the image, which was illuminated on a large screen above him. Mike Cosby was speaking about “a very old and a very strong idea,” the existence of a water route that crossed America’s unknown interior and could deliver the traveler to the Pacific Ocean. He was talking about a time when the Nation, as it was known in 1803, stopped just beyond the Mississippi and disappeared into mystery. No one could guess what lay beyond. “Not only did [they] not know,” said Cosby, “There was no way to find out.”

tent of many

oices

in the footsteps of lewis and clark

by joseph flanagan

Opposite: The Lewis and Clark traveling exhibit on the National Mall in Washington, DC.

The man stood in a cavernous tent, just warm enough to be comfortable, with raw earth underfoot and a vague feeling of the frontier about it. Outside, in the shadow of the Washington Monument, people in muddy boots stepped around tent stakes, busily establishing semi-permanence, the peculiar limbo between here and gone that is the same in encampments the world over. This is among the first stops for Corps of Discovery II: 200 Years to the Future, the traveling exhibit that will spend three and a half years crossing the country in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Presented by the National Park Service with the help of a long list of Indian tribes and State, local, and Federal agencies, the exhibit will follow the original expedition's route from St. Louis to Fort Clatsop and back. Along the way it will not only educate, but stimulate discussion on such varied (and ultimately related) issues as identity, history, culture, science, and human relationships. This will all be done out of the back of an 18-wheeler. Emblazoned with images of the expedition's characters and scenery, the semi carries 80,000 pounds of exhibit equipment and six miles of wiring to operate a full suite of audiovisual capabilities. When Corps II arrives at historic Lewis and Clark, it covers across the country, it will sprout three large tents, two of which serve as an exhibit that tells the story of the trip, the other a 150-seat auditorium for films, live performances, and presentations.

Gerard Baker, who is superintendent of Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, is doing double duty as superintendent of Corps II. He is a member of the Mandan-Hidatsa tribe, whose ancestors met Lewis and Clark when they came through North Dakota. Baker says the concept of Corps II began to take shape as the 200-year anniversary of the historic trek approached. "We knew we had to do something special for the bicentennial," he says. "We knew we needed

to bring it to the public. So we decided on a traveling exhibit . . . The goals are not only to get to know the people and the politics behind the original Corps of Discovery, but to see what's happened since Lewis and Clark came through."

Corps II will coincide with local bicentennial events happening across the Nation over the next few years. The National Park Service has consulted closely with the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, a private nonprofit organization with 40 chapters around the United States, 30 of which are on the trail itself. "Local culture" is an integral part of the presentation, says National Park Service public information officer Jeff Olson. Societies, clubs, and Native American groups will all be invited to offer their knowledge, stories, and points of view. "I think that's the really special part," says Olson, "how local communities really have an ownership of the story." The local foundation chapters, he says, are "just immersed in Lewis and Clark."

Getting an appreciation for the breadth of the expedition, says Olson, can sometimes be challenging. There is a benefit to the more focused approach of individual communities, which can answer questions like what Lewis and Clark did in that particular place and with whom they interacted. "These [local chapters] really delve into that part," Olson says. Chief of logistics Carol McBryant, who

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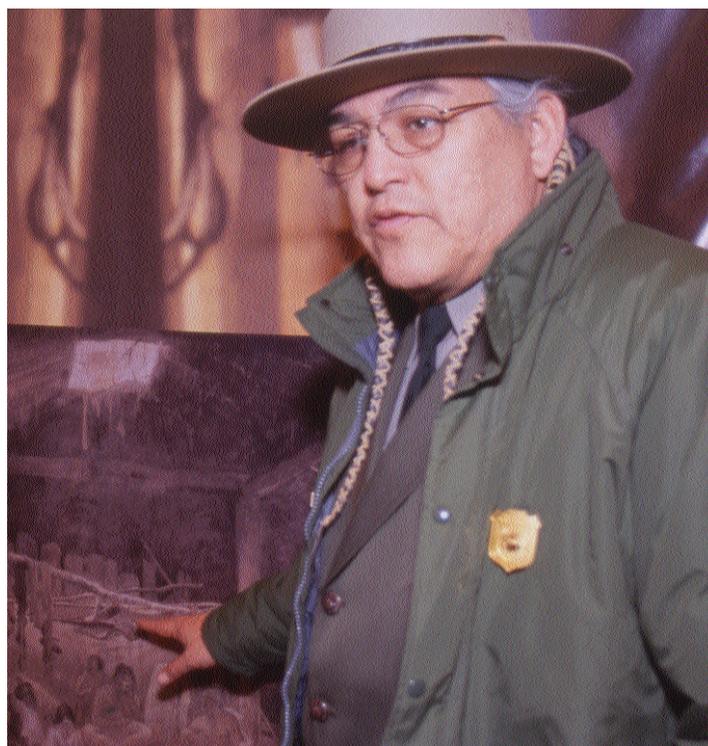
**Gerard Baker,
Superintendent,
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Discovery II**



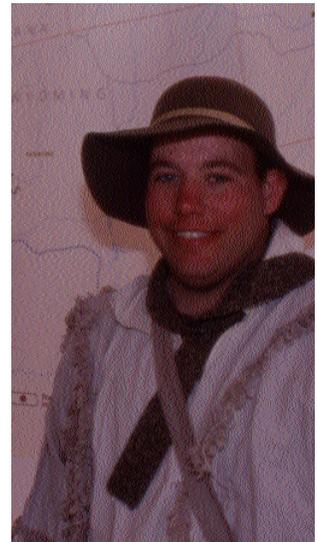
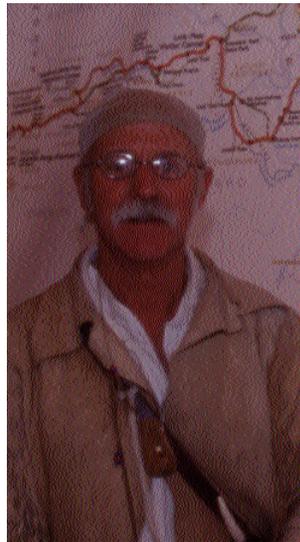
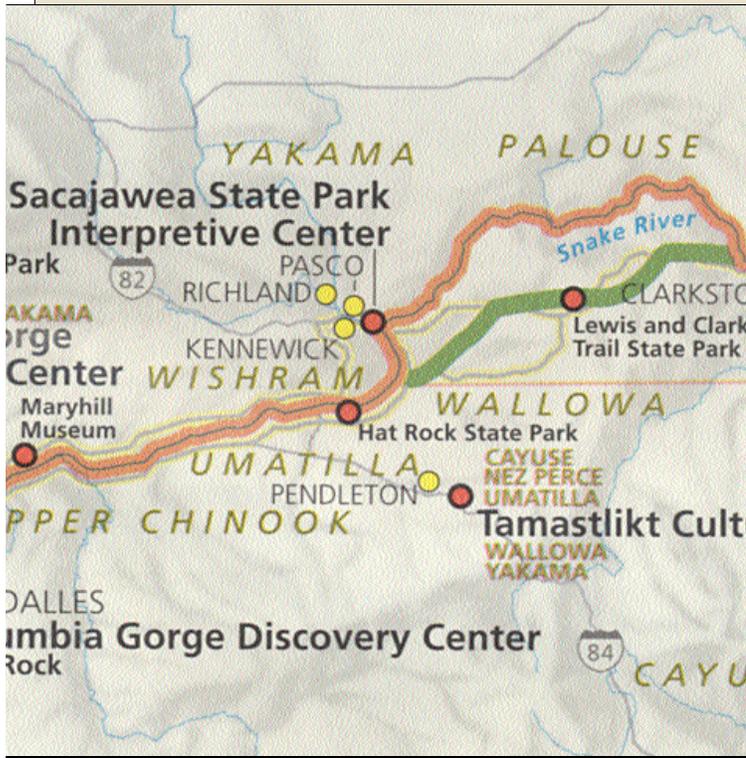
Above: Visitors take the audio tour inside the tent. Right: Superintendent Gerard Baker.

is traveling with Corps II, says the exhibit will “help spark the nation” as a supplement to bicentennial events planned across the country. “From here all the way out to Fort Clatsop they’re excited about our arrival,” she says.

In Washington, DC, Ranger J.P. McCarthy greeted visitors coming into the exhibit tent bundled up against the cold. Rangers from as far away as Mesa Verde National Park and Lincoln Home National Historic Site are spending six-month shifts with Corps II. As the original explorers did prior to heading west, the National Park Service staff is getting a feel for how everything is going to work. McCarthy hands out audio sets to visitors, who begin the self-guided



TOP AND ABOVE: JET LOWE/NPS/HAER



ONLINE TRAVEL ITINERARY

Touring Lewis and Clark Sites on the National Register of Historic Places

From St. Louis to Fort Clatsop and all the encampments between, Internet users can follow the trail of the original Corps of Discovery with "The Lewis and Clark Expedition," the latest in a series of National Park Service travel itineraries using properties on its National Register of Historic Places as a unifying theme.

Timed to coincide with the expedition's bicentennial, the itinerary covers the breadth of the Lewis and Clark experience, combining an educational approach with encouragement to travel.

The site offers a wealth of background plus an interactive route to the Pacific tied to 33 National Register properties that Lewis and Clark actually visited. Tracing the Corps' path, users can click on places such as Traveler's Rest in Montana, Lemhi Pass in Idaho, or Chinook Point in Washington. A visit to any of these stops on the trail yields color photos, an explanation of how the site fits into the story, and practical information for visitors.

"The Lewis and Clark Expedition" links to local and regional web sites too. Integral to the user-friendly itinerary is a series of essays ("Preparing for the Journey," "Scientific Encounters," and "The Trail Today") that cover aspects of the expedition.

To create the website, the National Register collaborated with Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers.

For more information on the National Register and to view the complete series of National Register travel itineraries, go to www.cr.nps.gov/nr.

Above: Exhibit staff in period dress. **Opposite:** Baker with the semi that carries Corps II.

tour, and comments that the exhibit "brings the flavor of a national park to people who don't have one."

The inner surfaces of the exhibit tent have images on them, a densely colorful storyboard where one image blends into the next as visitors follow the narrated expedition from St. Louis up the Missouri and into unknown territory. Paintings by Karl Bodmer and George Catlin are prominently displayed, as is a large map at the tent's entrance depicting the route and the geography and which so far appears to be one of the exhibit's biggest attractions.

The larger tent, the Tent of Many Voices, is the venue for presentations, films, and performances. Inside is a stage behind which hangs a large screen for films, video, and slide shows. Objects can also be projected and viewed from all perspectives. A 30-ton HVAC system mounted in the semi provides heat and air conditioning.

This is where scores of Federal agencies explain their stewardship of the public lands along the trail, introducing visitors to the natural world encountered by Lewis and Clark, the grasslands, forests, and waterways. The BLM's Native Seed Program will discuss attempts to



MAP: NPS HARPERS FERRY CENTER. LEFT AND ABOVE: JET LOWE/NPS/HAER

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restore some of the plants that Lewis and Clark saw. Agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the U.S. Geological Survey will discuss subjects like the explorers’ attempts to map the geography and identify the flora and fauna, as well as modern watershed development and the repercussions brought about by damming the rivers. Musicians will play the music of the time. Taxonomists and mammologists will talk about the animals of the interior, doctors about whether Lewis was a suicide or murder victim. American Indians will tell their stories not only from an historical perspective, but taking in the future as well. Mike Cosby—the BLM representative who spoke on the mystery of what lay beyond the Mississippi in 1803—was offering a presentation called “Reality Check at Lemhi Pass,” a comparison of what Lewis and Clark thought they would find with what they actually did. This was to be followed by a showing of Ken Burns’ documentary on the explorers.

That is just a small sampling of what visitors can experience in the tent along Corps II’s route. Six hours of programming is scheduled every day. Jeff Olson says it is

broken down into three components: the American Indian perspective, the Federal government’s preservation role, and the culture of the place where the exhibit happens to be at the moment. Olson mentions the Swedes in the Dakotas, and German immigrants who came to the plains. “Whatever community we’re in, we’re looking for the local culture, and bringing people [who represent it] on stage as presenters.”

Corps II will also be stopping at inner city schools. Baker says the exhibit will “take the story to those students who may never have an opportunity to see those rivers and mountains that Lewis and Clark saw.”

“A primary component,” Baker says, “is the Indian communities.” He spent three years talking to tribes along the route, who at first were keptic. McBryant says that many view the Lewis and Clark expedition as “the beginning of the end of their culture.” Adds Baker, “We’re still the Government in the eyes of a lot of Indian people. And many still don’t trust the Government.” But the plan was for the tribes to tell their stories unadorned. “Some of it is hurtful,” says McBryant. “Some of it is hard . . . [But] that voice has always been a part of the



planning.” Once they understood that they would have a voice, however, most tribes agreed to participate.

As Corps II rolls westward, presentations in the Tent of Many Voices will be videotaped, as will original Lewis and Clark campsites. Oral histories are being conducted along the way and added to the visual record. This material is sent to the Peter Kiewit Institute of the University of Nebraska, a National Park Service partner. The institute is building an educational website as a companion to Corps II, which features a database of images, videos, and maps.

Teachers can use the material as a supplement in lessons. Tribal elders who come to the Tent of Many Voices will be interviewed and filmed, with the footage given to the tribes to pass on to future generations.

All of Corps II’s components come together to express the complex chain of events that followed the expedition and how we evolved as a Nation afterward. The central theme—of ramifications far beyond 19th century geography and politics and well into the realms of culture, science, and the natural world—ultimately brings the focus to the human element. Says Olson, “You can’t be involved in this very long before you start to ask yourself, ‘Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going?’ People who knew little more than that Lewis and Clark were explorers . . . see where [they] fit in.”

During the planning stages, Baker says he decided that more than anything else he was interested in inciting curiosity. “What I want people to take with them is a whole boatload of questions,” he says. As far as the effects of the exploration are concerned, “We’re just touching the tip of the iceberg [regarding] culture and history and nature.”

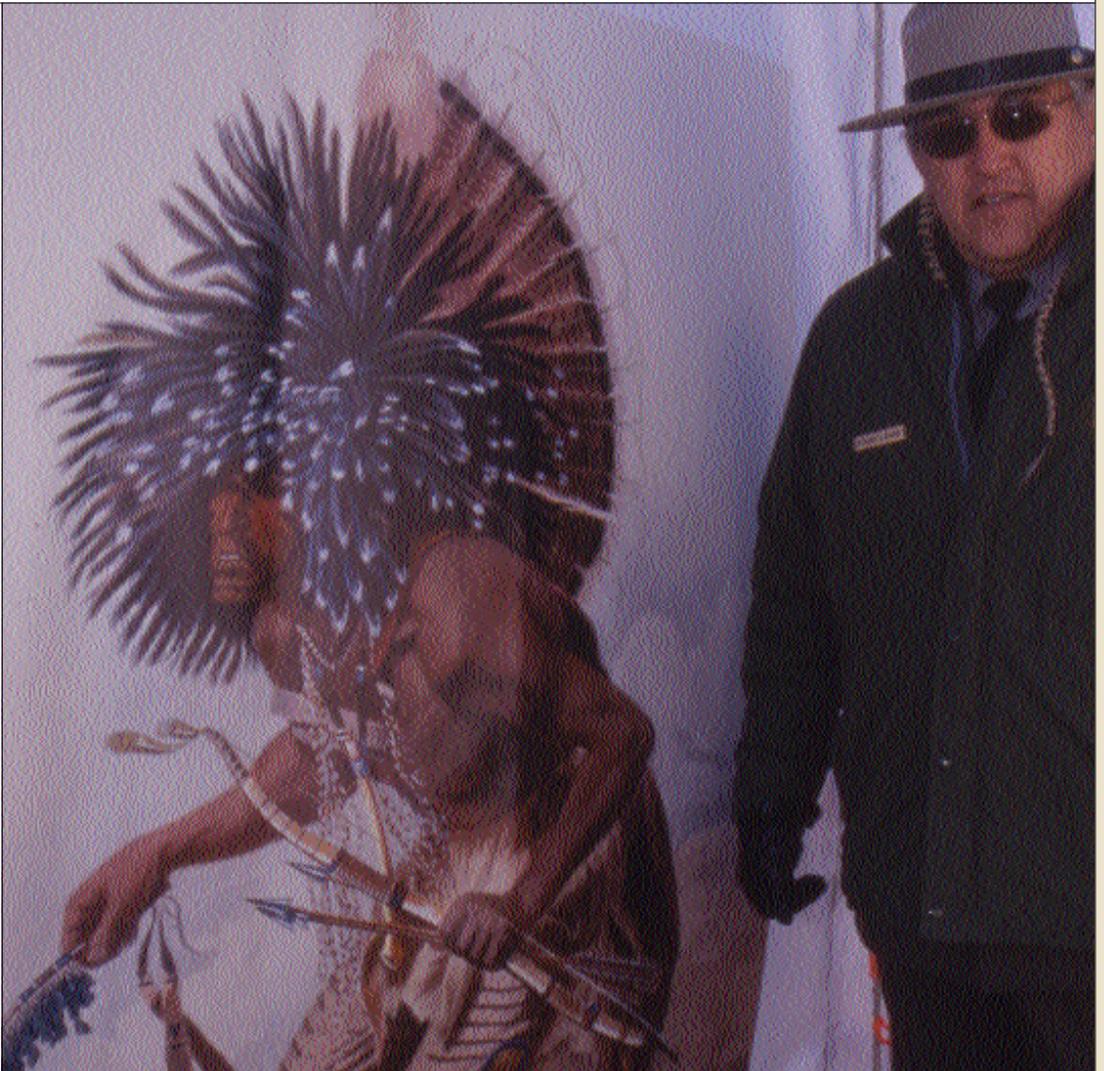
Carol McBryant expands on the human significance of the trek, explaining that the expedition was made up of people of many cultures—Anglo, French, German, Indian, and African American—who lived, worked, and endured hardship together. “The choices they made on any given day shaped our Nation,” she says. This is particularly important for young people to understand. “Especially with kids—the choices they make in their relationships with each other and about the earth will shape what the future will be like.”

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Top left: Corps II Superintendent Baker with Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton. **Top right:** A performance in the Tent of Many Voices. **Right:** Baker with image of Hidatsa dancer emblazoned on exhibit tent.



RIGHT: JET LOVENSFHAER. ABOVE: TAMI HELEMANNDOTI